DRIPPING SPRINGS
Texas

Date: **November 3, 2026**

To: **Mayor & City Council**

From: **Michelle Fischer, Sign Administrator**

Re: **Headwaters East Commercial Master Sign Plan Ordinance,** *Applicant: Will Wiess, Marathon Equity*

The proposed Headwaters East Commercial Master Sign Plan Ordinance has been reviewed under the current Sign Ordinance (Chapter 26, City of Dripping Springs Code of Ordinances) adopted on September 15, 2026.

Headwaters East Commercial is a large multi-unit development on 43 acres fronting US Highway 290 in the Headwaters Subdivision within Planned Development District #6. There will be over 300,000 square feet of retail space and 17 building. This development warrants having a Master Sign Plan, which is a comprehensive sign program for a property, project, development, multi-unit complex, planned development, development agreement, or other defined area (Definitions, Sign Ordinance). Add info on Applicant.

This Master Sign Plan is before City Council for consideration because it:

(1) requests standards materially different from the Sign Ordinance;
(2) affects a large development and multi-unit project;
(3) includes multiple variances;
(4) affects a major gateway corridor;
(5) involves significant public interest; and
(6) should be adopted by ordinance.

The Headwater East Commercial Master Sign Plan includes variances, also referred to in the Sign Ordinance as alternative standards, for multi-unit complex monument, wall, directional, and flagpole signs. All owners, tenants, subtenants, and successors within the Master Sign Plan area shall comply with the approved Master Sign Plan. All other signs in the development are required to comply with the City's Sign Ordinance.

Here is a comparison of the proposed alternative design standards to the Sign Ordinance's standards:

TYPE OF SIGN	SIGN ORDINANCE STANDARDS	ALTERNATIVE STANDARDS
Multi-unit Complex Monument	Height: 6 feet	Height: 18’ 9”
	Sign Area: 48 square feet	Sign Area: 96 square feet (tenant panels only; does not include “Headwaters”)
	Quantity: 1 per complex; if located at the intersection of two arterial streets, may have 1 such sign for each arterial frontage.	Quantity: 4 (2 at intersections with US Hwy 290, one at intersection with N. Canyonwood Dr., one at west entrance not currently an intersection).
Wall	Sign Area: 64 square feet or 1 square foot of wall-sign area for each linear foot of tenant frontage on that elevation.	Sign Area: 64-275 square feet, depending on square footage of tenant.
	Quantity: a business may have 1 wall sign on each public-facing building elevation with a customer entrance or other legitimate public-facing facade, provided the cumulative wall-sign area on any one elevation does not exceed the limit above.	Quantity: Zone: 1 Bldgs. 1 & 2: 2 wall signs per tenant; 64 to 275 square feet, depending on tenant size. Zone 2 : Bldgs. 3-13: 2 wall signs per tenant, one at rear facing US Hwy 290 reverse channel lit with white face; 64 or 100 square feet, depending on tenant size. Zone 3: Bldgs. 14-17: 1 wall sign per tenant; 64-275 square feet, depending on size. Bldgs. 1 & 17: 4 secondary signs allowed per building; 50 square feet cumulative.
Directional	Height: 4 feet	Height: 8’ 10”

	Sign Area: 4 square feet	Sign Area: 30 square feet (tenant panels only, does not include "Headwaters")
	Quantity: 4	Quantity: 5
Flagpole	Height: the lesser of 25 feet or the nearest principal roof height.	Height: Bldg. 16 may have a flagpole up to 25 feet without applying the nearest-principal-building-roof-height limitation.

The proposed Master Sign Plan approves site-specific alternative sign standards through a coordinated design that advances the purpose of the Sign Ordinance, which is to:

1) protect public health, safety, welfare, traffic safety, community character, and local economic vitality;
2) make sign rules easier to understand and administer;
3) allow businesses and property owners reasonable and practical sign visibility;
4) preserve the City's small-town, Hill Country, and historic character;
5) reduce visual clutter and traffic distractions;
6) protect dark skies and avoid light glare and trespass;
7) provide clear permit, variance, appeal, and master sign plan procedures;
8) regulate sign in a content-neutral manner to the greatest extent allowed by law; and
9) preserve and not restrict constitutionally protected noncommercial speech.

The proposed signs are compatible with the approved Alternative Exterior Design Standards for the buildings and with the City's Hill Country character. Renderings of the buildings are included in the Master Sign Plan. The designs of the building and signs are straightforward, simple designs using native materials, simple massing schemes, dominant sheltering roof forms, wide, generous porches, permanent pedestrian shade structures, natural earthtone hues, and numerous window and doorway openings, in a manner compatible with the historic and scenic character of Dripping Springs (definition of Hill Country Style).

The proposed Master Sign Plan meets the following considerations for alternative signage standards:

(1) provides coordinated design;
(2) improves readability and wayfinding;
(3) reduces visual clutter;

(4) uses durable materials and compatible colors;
(5) protects traffic and pedestrian safety;
(6) complies with the outdoor lighting ordinance;
(7) respects historic and Hill Country character; and
(8) does not discriminate based on viewpoint.

The proposed signs are similar in quantity, height, and area of the signs in other large commercial developments, such as Belterra Commercial.

The City Council may approve, approve with conditions, deny, or modify the Master Sign Plan Ordinance.

I recommend approval of the Master Sign Plan Ordinance as proposed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Fischer

Michelle Fischer, Sign Administrator

Applicable Regulations from the Sign Ordinance regarding the Headwaters East Commercial Master Sign Plan

Section 26.01.002. Purpose and findings

(a) The City adopts this Chapter under Texas Local Government Code Chapter 216 and the City's other lawful authority to protect public health, safety, welfare, traffic safety, community character, and local economic vitality.

(b) The City Council finds that signs are an important way for businesses, residents, property owners, public agencies, and other speakers to communicate. The City also finds that the size, height, location, lighting, construction, and design of signs can affect traffic safety, pedestrian safety, visual clutter, property values, neighborhood character, scenic views, dark skies, and the City's historic Hill Country character.

(c) This Chapter is intended to:

(1) make sign rules easier to understand and administer;
(2) allow businesses and property owners reasonable and practical sign visibility;
(3) preserve the City's small-town, Hill Country, and historic character;

(4) reduce visual clutter and traffic distractions;
(5) protect dark skies and avoid light glare and trespass;
(6) provide clear permit, variance, appeal, and master sign plan procedures;
(7) regulate sign in a content-neutral manner to the greatest extent allowed by law; and
(8) preserve and not restrict constitutionally protected noncommercial speech.

A Master Sign Plan means an approved comprehensive sign program for a property, project, development, multi-unit complex, planned development, development agreement, or other defined area (Definitions, Sign Ordinance).

Hill Country style means straightforward, simple design using native materials, small-scale forms, simple massing schemes, dominant sheltering roof forms, wide eave overhangs, generous porches or permanent pedestrian shade structures, and numerous window and doorway openings, in a manner compatible with the historic and scenic character of Dripping Springs (Definitions, Sign Ordinance).

Section 26.03.011. Master sign plan approval

(a) A master sign plan application shall be filed with the sign administrator and shall include the information required by Section 26.02.011 *[Master signplans]* and any City application checklist.

(b) The sign administrator may approve, approve with conditions, deny, or refer a master sign plan to the City Council.

(c) The sign administrator shall approve, approve with conditions, deny, or refer a complete master sign plan application within 30 calendar days after filing.

(d) The sign administrator should refer a master sign plan to the City Council when the plan:
(1) requests standards materially different from this Chapter;
(2) affects a large development or multi-unit project;
(3) includes multiple variances;
(4) affects a historic district or major gateway corridor;
(5) involves significant public interest; or
(6) should be adopted by ordinance or agreement.

(e) The City Council may approve, approve with conditions, deny, or modify a master sign plan.

(f) A master sign plan may approve site-specific alternative sign standards only when the plan provides coordinated design and the approving authority makes written findings that the plan advances the purposes of this Chapter and is compatible with the City's Hill Country and historic character.

(g) A master sign plan may allow alternative standards if the overall plan:

(1) provides coordinated design;
(2) improves readability and wayfinding;
(3) reduces visual clutter;
(4) uses durable materials and compatible colors;
(5) protects traffic and pedestrian safety;
(6) complies with the outdoor lighting ordinance;
(7) respects historic and Hill Country character; and
(8) does not discriminate based on viewpoint.

(h) An approved master sign plan controls over inconsistent general standards in this Chapter for the property covered by the plan only to the extent the plan expressly addresses or modifies the issue in question, unless state or federal law requires otherwise.

(i) A new project-specific master sign plan adopted after the effective date of this Chapter may be codified in Article 26.11 *[Preserved and Future Project-Specific Master Sign Plans]* and incorporated by reference, with the official plan documents maintained by the City Secretary.

(j) All owners, tenants, subtenants, and successors within the master sign plan area shall comply with the approved master sign plan.

Section 26.02.004. Commercial property

b) Wall signs. Each business may have wall signs with a permit subject to the following standards:

(1) the total wall-sign area for a business on any one building elevation may not exceed the lesser of 64 square feet or one square foot of wall-sign area for each linear foot of tenant frontage on that elevation;
(2) a business may have one wall sign on each public-facing building elevation with a customer entrance or other legitimate public-facing facade, provided the cumulative wall-sign area on any one elevation does not exceed the limit in paragraph (1);
(3) no individual wall sign may exceed 75 percent of the linear width of the tenant frontage on the elevation where the sign is installed;

(4) a wall sign may not extend above the roof or more than four feet beyond the wall to which it is attached;
(5) a wall sign may not exceed the maximum building height for the zoning district;
(6) a wall sign may not extend over public property except over an adjacent sidewalk where allowed by law; and
(7) address lettering shall be at least six inches high if an address is displayed.

(n) Flags. Each commercial lot may have up to four flags on up to two flagpoles without a permit if:
(1) each flag does not exceed 40 square feet;
(2) each flagpole does not exceed 25 feet in height or the nearest principal building roof height, whichever is lower;
(3) each flagpole meets the required building setback or ten feet, whichever is more restrictive; and
(4) no flagpole displays more than two flags.

(q) Directional signs. A commercial property may display up to four on-premises directional signs without a permit if each sign:

(1) provides only directional, access, circulation, entrance, exit, parking, building, tenant, or
(2) wayfinding information for the premises;
(3) does not exceed four square feet in signable area;
(4) does not exceed four feet in height;
(5) is located on the premises served by the sign;
(6) does not obstruct sight distance, a sidewalk, a pedestrian route, a driveway, a parking aisle, a fire lane, emergency access, a required exit, a utility easement, a drainage easement, or a public right-of-way;
(7) is not used as a substitute for an off-premises sign, billboard, or general advertising sign; and
(8) complies with all other applicable lighting, maintenance, and safety standards of this Chapter.

Section 26.02.006. Multi-unit nonresidential complexes

(a) This Section applies to shopping centers, office centers, mixed-use centers, business parks, and other nonresidential multi-unit complexes.

(b) In addition to signs otherwise allowed for the zoning district, a multi-unit complex may have one monument or wall tenant directory sign per complex with a permit if:
(1) the sign does not exceed 48 square feet;
(2) the sign does not exceed six feet in height if freestanding;

(3) the sign includes the complex name and street address, with address lettering at least six inches high;
(4) the sign complies with setbacks and any site-specific safety setback required by the sign administrator or building official; and
(5) a monument sign includes at least 24 square feet of maintained landscaping at the base.

(c) A complex located at the intersection of two arterial streets may have one such sign for each arterial frontage if approved by permit.

(d) A master sign plan is strongly encouraged for a multi-unit complex. Once approved, all owners, tenants, subtenants, and purchasers of individual units shall comply with the master sign plan.

(e) A tenant panel or sign face may be replaced with a permit if the replacement is the same size or smaller and otherwise complies with the approved sign or master sign plan.